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ENG 4300-003: Senior Seminar: Race and Sexuality in American Literature

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English 4300: Senior Seminar
Race and Sexuality in American Literature

Course Purpose

The purpose of this course is to encourage you to read about, write about, and discuss penetratingly a topic that should be relatively new to you – about the almost 400-year blending, paranoia, and violence between American Caucasians and African-Americans, largely, but by no means exclusively, in the South. All of this as reflected in the perspectives of white and black men and women through their literature. You will note that the reading and writing load is “moderate” (don’t make the mistake of thinking it “easy”) – based on my deeply felt view that gorging 15-18 books (and expecting 5-10 papers in return) down students cannot possibly produce sound learning. You will have time to complete readings, digest ideas, and form careful opinions about how those ideas measure up against your own and how all of it sharpens your own concept of what you think and feel, and what you, as a growing human being, are and want to be.

There is no “class attendance” policy per se. However, since one-third of the grade for the course is based on your contribution to discussion of the material studied, if you are not in class, you are obviously not contributing – therefore, poor attendance clearly affects your grade.

If you have a disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Class Meetings

1. Introductory Lecture: Cleaver Thesis/Mencken Thesis/Miscegenation, Prejudice, and the Law
2. Hernton, Sex and Racism in America
3. Movie: “Queen”
4. Brown, Clotel, or the President’s Daughter
5. Chesnutt, Wife of His Youth
6. Faulkner, Light in August
7. Baldwin, “Going to Meet the Man”/Whitlow article
8. Baldwin, Blues for Mister Charlie (1st Paper Due)
9. Movie: “Mississippi Burning”
10. Discussion: “Mississippi Burning”
11. Gaines, Of Love and Dust
12. Hayslip, When Heaven and Earth Changed Places
13. Shange, For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide
14. Course Conclusions
15. (Second Paper Summarized)

Suggested Readings

Gordon W. Allport, The Nature of Prejudice.
 Laurence A. Baughman, Southern Rape Complex.
 W.J. Cash, The Mind of the South.
 Eldridge Cleaver, Soul on Ice.
 Beth Day, Sexual Life Between Blacks and Whites.
 Gerda Lerner, Black Women in White America.
 Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma.
 Robert J. Sickels, Race, Marriage, and the Law.
 Lillian Smith, Killers of the Dream.

Course Grade

Papers, 1/3 each, Class Discussions, 1/3